



## Eric Waldo

Executive leadership at intersection of education, technology, equity, government, and public health  
Washington, District of Columbia, United States

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[U.S. Department of Health and  
Human Services \(HHS\)](#)



[University of Chicago Law School](#)



[Reach Higher Website](#) ↗

## About

Eric Waldo is a passionate senior executive and advocate around transformational education reform because of what it can do to cure poverty, change lives, and fundamentally improve communities. A senior policy, political, communications, and operations professional, as well as a former classroom teacher, Waldo thrives leading in fast-paced, high-stakes, entrepreneurial

EXHIBIT

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environments.

As Executive Director of Michelle Obama's Reach Higher initiative, Waldo works to inspire every student in the U.S. to take charge of their future by completing a post-secondary education, whether at a professional training program, a community college, or a 2-year or 4-year college or university. His role cuts across policy, advocacy, and community engagement to further the goal that the U.S. once again leads the world in terms of college graduates.

Before joining the White House, Waldo was Deputy Chief of Staff (DCOS) at the Department of Education (ED), where he helped lead and manage ED through President Obama's historic investment of \$100B in education funding via the Recovery Act. This work created important investments around system-level, cradle-to-career changes for states, districts, schools, and communities. Waldo also helped manage the Department of Defense (DOD) global K-12 school system as the Co-Chair for the Advisory Council for Dependents' Education, which advises and oversees the DOD schools.

One of the first attorneys hired on the 2007-2008 Obama Campaign, Waldo served as Deputy Staff Counsel, providing legal guidance on a wide array of election protection and operational issues for the \$750M Obama enterprise. After serving as an attorney on the Obama-Biden Presidential Transition Team, Waldo

joined ED as Special Assistant to Sec. Duncan prior to becoming DCOS.

Waldo earned a J.D. from the University of Chicago Law School, an M.Ed. from Harvard University, and an A.B. from Brown University. He currently resides in Washington, D.C.

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## Articles by Eric



[Here's the Toolkit to Help You Join Michelle Obama in Hosting a College Signing Day.](#)

By Eric Waldo  
Mar 30, 2017

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## Activity



**Max Trujillo prevé apoyar el proceso de reconstrucción desde su nuevo puesto en Desarrollo Rural**

Liked by Eric Waldo



One of our team members made a "Mainstay Wrapped" infographic about the scope of our engagement with students and staff this year. Thank you to the...

Liked by Eric Waldo



I'm thrilled to announce that I've joined The Wilderness Society (TWS) as Chief of Staff. The organization's mission is to unite #people to protect...

Liked by Eric Waldo

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Experience



## Chief Engagement Officer for the U.S. Surgeon General

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS)

Jun 2021 - Present 1 year 7 months

Washington DC-Baltimore Area

- General: Senior Advisor to the Surgeon General; advising and designing constituent and public facing campaigns around the country and the world around COVID19 vaccines, mental health, loneliness, clinician well-being, health misinformation, and public health more broadly.



## Board Member

Military Child Education Coalition

Feb 2018 - Present 4 years 11 months



## Executive Director Michelle Obama's Reach Higher Initiative; Chief Access & Equity Programs Officer

The Common Application

Jan 2019 - Jun 2021 2 years 6 months

Washington D.C. Metro Area

- General: Oversees 21-person, team (Comms, Policy, Product Strategy, & Outreach) to build college going and success movement around the country; now part of

senior leadership team for \$30M a year, 100-person mission-driven membership nonprofit; Co-lead for org-wide anti-racism and DEI training. Reports to CEO.

- Development: Manages over \$7M in grants from 13 major philanthropic institutions; secures over \$4M in additional in-kind donations from partners on a yearly basis
- Policy: Uses deep cradle-to-career policy expertise to implement evidence-based practices at scale (e.g., \$1.5M grant to send artificial intelligence nudge text messages to 500K students and families around the country)
- Communications/Influencer Engagement: Leads brand management and influencer strategy for Mrs. Obama's college access and success work; yearly engagements around Reach Higher initiatives have over 1 billion social media impressions for College Signing Day; produced YouTube "Dear Class of 2020" Virtual Graduation and series, "A Student's Guide to Your First Year of College"; organized 3,000 College Signing Days with 600K students in all fifty states and seven foreign countries; liaises with over 120 artists and influencers to use social media platforms to influence and reach out to Generation Z audiences in an authentic way.

- Public Speaking/Writing: Experienced keynote speaker on education. Sample speaking engagements include keynotes at Harvard University; Brown University, Ohio State University; SXSWedu; and National College Access Network. Featured columnist in Forbes; Forbes Quote of the Day 2018 and 2019. Published: Harvard Kennedy School Review; EdSurge; Journal of College Access. Frequently quoted in tier 1 publications.
- Social Media: Curate education content for Mrs. Obama social media (Twitter: 20.5.8M; Instagram: 45.9M); oversee curation of Reach Higher (Twitter: 71.K; Instagram: 66.4K) & Better Make Room content (Twitter: 35.6K; Instagram: 56.7K).

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## **Executive Director, Michelle Obama's Reach Higher Initiative & EVP for Education Civic Nation**

Mar 2017 – Jan 2019 1 year 11 months

Washington D.C. Metro Area

- General: Led transition of Mrs. Obama's college access work at incubator nonprofit where we created an 11-person advisory board; raised millions in foundation and

philanthropic support; and continued key programming and partnerships that allowed Reach Higher to grow, thrive, and find a stable nonprofit home.

- Nonprofit Merger: Helped lead effort for Reach Higher to get acquired by a mission-driven and aligned partner nonprofit. Secured over \$2M in in-kind legal support and managed complex nonprofit M&A in 8-month period.

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## Executive Director: Reach Higher

The White House

Apr 2014 – Jan 2017 2 years 10 months

Washington D.C. Metro Area

- General: leading First Lady Michelle Obama's Reach Higher initiative, which focuses on inspiring every student in America to take charge of their future by completing their education past high school, whether at a two-year or four year college or university, a community college, or a professional certificate or degree program
- College Opportunity Summit: Senior Advisor helping lead the White House/Department of ED "pen-and-phone" convening strategy around college opportunity. Outreach and collaboration led to over 630 new commitments from colleges, school districts, schools, and

nonprofits committing to improving post-secondary outcomes around: K12/Higher Education Partnerships; College Consortia Producing More Graduates; Producing More STEM Graduates; and Improving Training/College and Career-Readiness for school counselors.

- Global Communications Strategy: Designed and led national engagement, communications, and branding strategy for Reach Higher and the First Lady. Within two years, fostered 68K+ social media following on Twitter and Instagram; created regional engagement con<sup>ferences</sup>

~~to secure 23 states in new~~ plans around supporting college and career-readiness for school counselors. Deep experience as front-facing spokesperson across traditional and new media channels.

- Event Production: Produced 500+ person College Opportunity Summit with participation from President Obama, Vice President Biden, First Lady Michelle Obama, Secretary Duncan, and Domestic Policy Council Director Cecilia Munoz. Led production and facilitation of event logistics, funding, themes, and communications roll-out.

- Beating the Odds Summit: created and hosted first-ever summit at the White House on behalf of the First Lady focused on programming for 140 first-generation college-bound students from across the country.

- Better Make Room Campaign: launched White House youth engagement campaign focused on spurring GenZ

college-going. Over 500M social media impressions since Oct.

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## U.S. Department of Education

5 years 3 months

### Deputy Chief of Staff for Policy and Programs

Nov 2010 – Mar 2014 3 years 5 months

Washington D.C. Metro Area

- General: senior executive manager; strategically support and advise the Secretary and entire agency (~5K people, \$71B budget) on overall goals, vision, team, and policy portfolio; experienced public speaker
- Policy Development: lead on various policy development proposals, including: Military-Connected Family Policy; School Safety Policy/Gun Control Task Force; President's Task Force on Puerto Rico's Status
- White House and Interagency Portfolio: principal point of contact for White House on Interagency projects; chief adviser to the First Lady on her College Going Initiative; oversee drafting of weekly Department memo for the White House Chief of Staff and President of the United States reporting progress on key initiatives; liaise with White House on messaging, agency requests, Presidential Priority policies,

## and legal issues

- Global and Strategic Communications Manager: advise the Secretary, Chief of Staff, Assistant Secretary for Communications, and Press team on messaging, crisis communications, and media relations strategy
- Legal Counsel and Advisor to the Secretary: chief legal counsel to the Secretary for Administrative Law proceedings; liaise with the Department's Designated Agency Ethics Official to vet the Secretary's political activities; lead oversight efforts with Chief of Staff and General Counsel to ensure compliance with Congressional, Inspector General, Government Accountability Office, and other inquiries
- Human Capital Management: co-manage the team and process for recruiting, hiring, and retaining 154 political appointees; created agency-wide employee training and engagement initiatives; deep understanding of building high-performance organizational culture

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## Special Assistant to the Secretary

Jan 2009 – Nov 2010 1 year 11 months

Washington D.C. Metro Area

## Attorney

### Obama-Biden Presidential Transition Project

Nov 2008 – Jan 2009 3 months

Washington

- Lead vetting attorney for over 22 Senate confirmable Cabinet and sub-Cabinet level nominees

## Deputy Staff Counsel, Assistant Staff Counsel

### Obama for America

Sep 2007 – Nov 2008 1 year 3 months

Greater Chicago Area

- General Election: Assistant Staff Counsel: regional attorney for the Midwest and Western Regions, overseeing campaign finance law compliance, voter protection, and general operational legal issues for 17 states
- Primary Election: Deputy Staff Counsel: worked as part of a three person in-house legal team reviewing and providing sign-off on hundreds of leases, insurance requests, contracts, and employer tax requirements for all 54 contests; voter protection research and rapid response primary/caucus-day support

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## Law Clerk to the Honorable Ann Aldrich

U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Ohio

Aug 2006 – Aug 2007 1 year 1 month

Cleveland/Akron, Ohio Area

- Researched and drafted orders on a wide variety of motions before the court; aided judge with in-court proceedings
- Drafted appellate bench memos and published opinions for sittings with the United States Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit



## Summer Associate

Latham & Watkins

Jun 2005 – Aug 2005 3 months

Greater New York City Area



## Extern to the Honorable Judge Robert W. Gettleman

U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Illinois

Jun 2004 – Aug 2004 3 months

Greater Chicago Area



## English Teacher

Breakthrough Collaborative (formerly Summerbridge)

Jun 2000 – Sep 2000 4 months

Providence, Rhode Island, United States

- Designed and team-taught English and Improvisational Acting classes to 14 inner-city 7th and 8th graders

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## Education



### **University of Chicago Law School**

Doctor of Law (J.D.)

2003 – 2006

Activities and Societies: Edwin F. Mandel Legal Aid Clinic; Criminal and Juvenile Justice Project; Latino Law Students Association



### **Harvard University Graduate School of Education**

Master of Education (M.Ed.)International Education Policy

2002 – 2003



### **Brown University**

Bachelor of Arts (B.A.)Comparative Literature

1996 – 2000

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## Projects

### **REALITY Leadership Institute, Schusterman Foundation, 2021 Inaugural Cohort Member**

Jan 2021 – Present

## Mentor for Schmidt Futures' "Entrepreneur in Residence" program

Aug 2020 - Present

## Salesforce.org Equity in Education Community Fellow

Feb 2021 - Jun 2021

[See project ↗](#)

## Biden-Harris 2020 Voter Protection Headquarters Boiler Room (TX and CO Legal Desk)

Oct 2020 - Nov 2020

Liaison for Texas and Colorado state legal directors with campaign HQ. Liaised directly with campaign voter protection leadership and state legal counsel on voter protection operations, volunteer management, lawsuits, and escalating high level legal and systematic voter suppression issues.

## REALITY Impact 2019 Summer Cohort, Schusterman Foundation

Jun 2019 - Jun 2019

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### Honors & Awards

## Univision's 15 Distinguished Latinos in the Obama White House ("Los Hispanos Del Presidente")

Univision

Sep 2014

Selected by Univision as part of Hispanic Heritage Month for a full online interview and profile as one of the 15 most distinguished Latino voices serving in the Obama White House.

## **2014 Aspen Ideas Festival Scholar**

The Aspen Institute

Jun 2014

Nominated and selected by The Aspen Institute as a 2014 Aspen Ideas Scholar

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Languages

**Spanish**

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**Italian**

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**French**

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Organizations

**The Truman Foundation**

Board of Trustees

Dec 2012 – Jan 2017

Designated by the U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan to represent him on the Truman Foundation Board of Trustees

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## Recommendations received



### Adam B.

"I clearly remember the first time I met Eric. He was presenting to a group on his recent work, and a week later many of us were still talking about his energy and vision. After a year working together, I feel that same sense of inspiration walking out of even the most dull meetings when he's there. Eric is a very gifted leader, who brings operational prowess, savvy management instincts, brilliant and clear strategic thinking, along with the intangibles that motivate his colleagues and team to think big and go all in. Eric is a rare find—you will find your organization and yourself far better off for having intersected with him."



### Andrea Mokros

"Eric is one of those rare talents who does not work in a silo - he understands intricate policy, how to effectively communicate it, and how to motivate a team to implement it. His ability to navigate every part of an issue campaign - and to express a vision that inspired those around him - is at the heart of why Reach Higher has achieved such great success and momentum in such a short amount of time."

11 people have recommended Eric

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More activity by Eric



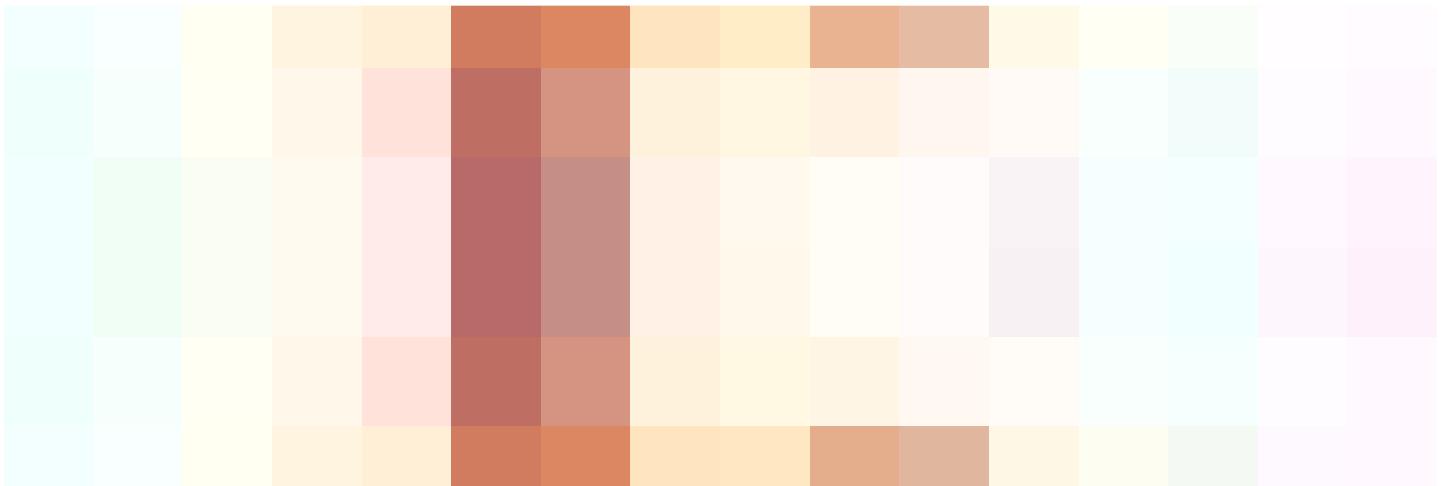
As we close out the year and head into the holidays its often a time for reflection and gratitude, today, I am so grateful and excited for Guild...

Liked by Eric Waldo



What a great way to finish the week, by spending time with our Parent Advisory Committee at The American School of Bangkok this morning. At XCL...

Liked by Eric Waldo



**Delighted to announce that XCL Education is a founding member of the Global Independent Schools Association (GISA), the first worldwide...**

Liked by Eric Waldo



**Educators deserve more than mediocre professional learning! Check out this preview of coming attractions at ASCD/ISTE**

Liked by Eric Waldo



**THE WHITE HOUSE**  
**WASHINGTON**

Impressive announcement from the White House today on the many areas the Puerto Rico and Federal Governments are committed to driving economic growth...

Liked by Eric Waldo



Timely reminder from Erica Pandey on the power of active gratitude for well-being. The data is clear. "Whether we spend our time dwelling on things...

Liked by Eric Waldo



#FacultyDiversity supports #StudentSuccess & can have an impact on students' sense of belonging, retention rates, & persistence. @EdTrust's new...

Liked by Eric Waldo

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